

System of Ethical Life

Introduction

Knowledge of the Idea of the absolute ethical order depends entirely on the establishment of perfect adequacy between intuition and concept, because the Idea itself is nothing other than the identity of the two. But if this identity is to be actually known, it must be thought as a made adequacy. But because they are then held apart from one another in an equation as its two sides, they are afflicted with a difference. One side has the form of universality, the other the opposed form of particularity. Therefore, in order that the equation be completely established, what was first put in the form of particularity must be put in the form of universality, while what was given the form of universality must now be given the form of particularity.

But what is truly the universal is intuition, while what is truly particular is the absolute concept. Thus each must be posited over against the other, now under the form of particularity, again under the form of universality; now intuition must be subsumed under the concept and again the concept under intuition. Although this last relation is the absolute one, for the reason given, the first one is just as absolutely necessary for their perfect equality to be known, since the latter relation is one and only one relation and therefore the absolute equivalence of intuition and knowledge is not posited in it. Now the Idea of the absolute ethical order is the resumption of absolute reality into itself as into a unity, so that this resumption and this unity are an absolute totality. The intuition of this totality is an absolute people, while its concept is the absolute oneness of the individuals.

In the first place, intuition must be subsumed under the concept. Thereby the absolute ethical order appears as nature, because nature itself is but the subsumption of intuition under the concept, with the result therefore that intuition, the unity, remains the inner, while the multiplicity of the concept and the concept's absolute movement rises to the surface. In this subsumption, in that case, the intuition of the ethical order its particular aspect which is a people becomes a manifold reality or a single individuality, a single man; and as a result the absolute resumption of nature into itself becomes something hovering over this single individual, or something formal, because the formal is precisely the unity which is

not in itself either absolute concept or absolute movement. At the same time, precisely because this unity hovers over the single individual, he does not emerge from it or abstract himself from it; it is in him but is concealed in him; and it appears in this contradiction, namely, that this inner light does not absolutely coincide or unite with the universal light hovering over him as something according to which he is driven on, as impulse or striving. Or in this way the identity of the particular (i.e., the side onto which the intuition has now stepped) with the universal is determined as an imperfect unification or as a relation between the two.

Course: Hegel

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